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Historical Beginnings

Few men have wielded a greater influence than Walter Damrosch in the field of music. Born in Germany in 1862, Damrosch was the holder of many honorary degrees from leading American universities. He founded the Damrosch Opera Company in 1894 and organized the New York Symphony Orchestra into a permanent orchestra in 1903. He served as musical counselor of the National Broadcasting Company from 1928 to 1947 and was the founder and nationally famous conductor of orchestral radio concerts for public schools and colleges from 1928 to 1942. It was while deeply immersed in such musical activities that Damrosch declared on February 10, 1928, that "Iowa is the most musical State in the Union." He based his opinion upon the response of his listening audience to his radio broadcasting.

If this remarkable distinction is true, a number of forces have contributed to it. High among these would be the work of the Federated Music Clubs of Iowa, the Cornell May Music Festival, the

High School Music Festivals, and the impact of the radio programs presented by Walter Damrosch himself. That Iowa stood at the forefront among her sister states is attested by the high rank attained by many of her bands in national music contests. No city in Iowa eclipsed Mason City in the honors it attained in these colorful and highly competitive national music meets.

In 1928, the Mason City High School band took eighth place and in 1929 it won third place in national contests. During the 1930's, under the direction of Carleton L. Stewart, the Mason City High School band won Division I ratings in all nine national and regional band contests it entered. In addition, Stewart directed the Mason City High School symphony orchestra to five Division I and one Division II ratings in the national orchestra competition. Truly, the opinion of Walter Damrosch was being upheld by these outstanding young musicians.

It should be pointed out, however, that back in 1928 the number of Iowa high school bands was not very great. Thus, when a group of Mason City businessmen, headed by Lester Milligan, laid plans to observe the 75th anniversary of the founding of Mason City in 1928, they invited a number of bands to participate. A total of five bands (outside of Mason City) responded to their invitation.

Seven years later, in 1935, the convention com-

mittee of the Mason City Chamber of Commerce succeeded in getting the Iowa Bandmasters Association to meet in Mason City in 1936. It was the responsibility of the host city to invite bands from the surrounding area to attend and participate in the meeting of the Iowa Bandmasters. Eighteen bands responded to the invitation, and the entire community was delighted with the outpouring of music. It was decided to hold a band festival annually thereafter.

Meanwhile, the meeting of the Iowa Bandmasters Association in Mason City did not go unnoticed. Under the caption—"3 Days of Music at Mason City"—the *Des Moines Register* of June 21, 1936, noted:

The Iowa Bandmasters Association Convention will convene this evening with a concert by the Mason City municipal band in East park under the direction of Charles F. Weaver, with Karl L. King of Fort Dodge and Carleton Stewart of Mason City, president of the bandmasters association, guest conductors.

The original program of this 3-day session gives one an insight into band leaders, participating communities, and the type of music offered on this historic occasion.

The success of the 1936 Iowa Bandmasters Association meeting exceeded the most sanguine hopes of its proponents. A second, and highly successful, Band Festival was held at Mason City in 1937. This was followed by the third North

Sunday, June 21

8:00 P. M. At East Park. Concert by the Mason City Municipal Band; C. F. Weaver, Conductor.

1. *"Boston Commandery"—March _____ *Carter*
2. *"Raymond"—Overture _____ *Thomas*
3. **Baritone Solo—Selected
Walter Beeler
4. ***"Hall of Fame"—Selection _____ *Safranek*
5. **Cornet Solo—Selected
Craig McHenry
6. **Brass Ensemble—Selected
7. ***"In a Moonlit Garden" _____ *King*
8. ***"Cyrus the Great"—March _____ *King*

*Mr. Weaver conducting.

**Carleton L. Stewart, director of Mason City High School Band and president of the Association, conducting.

***Karl L. King, eminent composer and director of Fort Dodge Municipal Band, conducting.

Monday, June 22

9:00 A. M. Music Hall. Rehearsal of new music.

12:00 Noon Luncheon of Bandmasters.

2:00 P. M. Music Hall. Band clinic.

6:00 P. M. Hotel Hanford. Buffet supper. Compliments of the hotel and business and professional men in Mason City.

Tuesday, June 23

8:30 A. M. Business session.

10:00 A. M. to 10:25. Concert in Central Park. Lake Mills Band, Iver L. Moen, Director.

10:25 A. M. to 10:40. Concert in Central Park. West Union Band, Norman C. Owen, Director.

11:00 A. M. Parade of bands and floats, featuring musical organizations, ideas and figures.

12:30 P. M. Luncheon and election of officers.

12:00 to 6:00 P. M. Band concerts in Central Park with the following bands participating:

12:00 Noon Alexander, Howard P. Berry, Conductor.

12:30 P. M. Applington, Robert Leach, Conductor.

1:00 P. M. Britt, Donald I. Moore, Conductor.

1:30 P. M. Kensett, Ralph Geer, Conductor.

2:00 P. M. Clear Lake, John Kopecky, Conductor.

2:30 P. M. Greene, Earl G. Gary, Conductor.

3:00 P. M. Hampton, F. O. Griffen, Conductor.

3:30 P. M. Hanlontown-Fertile, M. W. Seipp, Conductor.

4:00 P. M. Manly, Melvin Hill, Conductor.

4:30 P. M. Marble Rock, O. K. Conklin, Conductor.

5:00 P. M. Nora Springs, Robert Ruby, Conductor.

5:30 P. M. Osage, H. L. Lindstrom, Conductor.

6:00 P. M. Sheffield, M. E. Hunt, Conductor.

Also participating in the parade and at the stadium the Ackley School Band, Robert Leach, Conductor; Clear Lake Junior Drum and Bugle Corps, John Kopecky, Conductor; Mason City High School Band, Carleton L. Stewart, Conductor; and Drum Corps and Junior Drum and Bugle Corps of the Clausen-Worden Post of the American Legion.

The floats are by courtesy of a large number of Mason City civic organizations.

If rain should interfere, the morning parade will be changed to 3:00 P. M., and the stadium event will be held in the Armory.

Program of the 1936 Iowa Bandmaster's Association in Mason City

7:30 P. M. Band concert and special features at Mason City's beautiful, lighted Roosevelt Stadium.

7:30 to 7:55. 1. Concert by the Northwood High School Band, winners of Division I honors at the Cleveland national contest. L. T. Dillon, Conductor.

8:00 P. M. 2. Grand entry of the visiting bands and floats.

8:15 P. M. 3. Mason City Municipal Band, C. F. Weaver, Conductor.

a. "March of Time"—Medley of Standard Marches.

b. Overture—"Zampa."

4. Exhibition Drill, Ackley School Band, Robert Leach, Director.

5. Specialties by Mason City Band soloists.

a. Baritone Solo—Selected, Walter Beeler, Ithaca School of Music.

b. Cornet Solo—Selected, Craig McHenry, Ithaca School of Music.

c. Brass Ensemble—Selected.

6. Exhibition Drill. The Junior Drum and Bugle Corps of the Clausen-Worden Post of the American Legion.

7. Grand finale by the massed bands.

"Iowa Band Law March" (King). Major Geo. W. Landers, Honorary Life President of Iowa Bandmasters Association, Director.

"Military Escort" (Fillmore). Carleton Stewart President Iowa Bandmasters, Director.

"Land of Plenty" (Barnhouse). Karl L. King, Eminent Composer and Director of the Ft. Dodge Municipal Band, Director.

"Stars and Stripes Forever" (Sousa). Directed by the incoming president of the Iowa Bandmasters Association.

OFFICIAL PROGRAM

MASON CITY'S

Centennial--85th Anniversary--Band Festival

TUESDAY, JUNE 21, 1938

Third Annual North Iowa Band Festival Day

Mason City Chamber of Commerce, sponsor

9:00 a. m. to 6:00 p. m.—Concerts in Central Park by visiting bands.
1:00 a. m. Centennial Parade of bands and floats.
2:30 p. m. Luncheon for visiting officials, bandmasters, queen candidates at Hanford Hotel.
7:15 p. m. Roosevelt Stadium—GRAND FINALE, crowning of the queen, drills, massed bands.
All events, all days free to the public. In case of rain the parade will be held at 4:00 p. m., and the stadium event will be held in the Armory.

CONCERT SCHEDULE IN CENTRAL PARK

TIME	BAND	CONDUCTOR
9:00 a. m.	Sheffield	F. F. Griffen
10:00 a. m.	Rudd	D. T. Maurer
11:00 a. m.	Hanlontown	Wm. Watson
12:00 noon	Belmond	Harry Keller
1:00 p. m.	Ackley (marching)	Marlyn Ridout
2:00 p. m.	Humboldt (marching)	T. M. Talmadge
3:00 p. m.	Parade	
4:00 p. m.	Alden	Marlyn Ridout
5:00 p. m.	Alexander	Leonard A. Miller
6:00 p. m.	Kensett	Ralph Geer
7:00 p. m.	Britt	Wolfgang Edelmann
8:00 p. m.	Buffalo Center	L. A. Bergen
9:00 p. m.	Bristow	Frank A. Else
10:00 p. m.	Clarion	C. A. Burmeister
11:00 p. m.	Decorah	Russell H. Platz
12:00 noon	Dumont	M. W. Seipp
1:00 p. m.	Fonda	H. P. Berry
2:00 p. m.	Forest City	Hugh J. Croft
3:00 p. m.	Garner	Don Anderson
4:00 p. m.	Goodell	Phyllis Dougan
5:00 p. m.	Greene	Paul G. Prens
6:00 p. m.	Klemme	Martin Elstad
7:00 p. m.	Lake Mills	Marcus Boe
8:00 p. m.	Massed Band Concert	

General direction of Carleton Stewart
with the following bands participating:

Alden—L. T. Dillon	Rockford—J. I. Haugen
Marble Rock—Keith Conklin	Rockwell—Ray C. Smith
Hampton—V. F. Lunn	Ventura—John Kopecky
Waukon—E. L. Snyder	Clarksville—Ray C. Smith
Northwood—L. T. Dillon	Chapin—Frank A. Else
Wellsburg—Lester R. Yager	

BROADCAST FROM MUSIC HALL OVER KGLO

9:00 a. m.	Osage	Frank Piersol
10:00 a. m.	Thompson	H. F. Barton
11:00 a. m.	Eagle Grove	A. O. Bogard
12:00 noon	Iowa Falls	J. E. Cook
1:00 p. m.	Hampton	F. O. Griffen

The combined bands from Hayfield, Swaledale and Thornton, under the direction of Karl Bohlen, will give a concert at I. O. O. F. Home at 1:30 p. m.

OFFICIAL PROGRAM—Continued

Fifth North Iowa Band Festival

Sponsored by the Mason City Chamber of Commerce

MASON CITY—TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 1940

GRAND FINALE—ROOSEVELT BASEBALL PARK

JOSEPH H. HAMILTON, Presiding

7:00 p. m. Concert by the combined bands of Hampton, Belmond, and Britt directed by F. O. Griffen, father and his two sons, Forest and Durwood.
Music for a number of special events to follow is furnished by the combined bands of Clarion, C. A. Burmeister, director and Eagle Grove, Marcus G. Boe, director.
7:30 p. m. The Twirlers—Drum majors and special performers from the many bands.
7:40 p. m. The Star Spangled Banner—Flag raising ceremony.
7:45 p. m. Grand entry of the candidates for Miss North Iowa.
8:00 p. m. Marching—Waverly, Robert Bagley, director.
(The findings of the eleven judges are now opened, tabulated and their choice announced for Queen of the Festival.)
8:15 p. m. Presentation of the gifts and crowning of the Queen.
8:30 p. m. "New lights on the scene???"
8:35 p. m. Marching—The Iowa Training School Band from Eldora, I. A. Lowell, director.
8:50 p. m. Massed band numbers, directed by Carleton L. Stewart, Mason City. (All bandmasters direct own bands in concert.)
a. Semper Fidelis.....Sousa
b. The Footlifter.....Fillmore
c. Our Director.....Bigelow
9:00 p. m. Grand exit of the Queen and her attendants.
9:15 p. m. The entire audience joins in America and God Bless America, W. Earl Hall, leading.

GOOD NIGHT — DRIVE SAFELY — COME AGAIN

Organizations participating in this Festival and their directors.

Ackley.....Marlyn Ridout	Klemme, Minnesota.....L. B. Olson
Alden.....Marlyn Ridout	Klemme.....Bernard Overhien
Alexander.....Clyde Freeman	Lake Mills.....Daniel L. Martino
Algona.....Dan Jensen	Latimer.....Marlyn Ridout
Allison.....Gordon L. Cosner	Manly.....Lawrence Hahn
Aplington.....R. C. Baskins	Marble Rock.....O. K. Conklin
Belmond.....F. F. Griffen	Mason City.....Carleton Stewart
Britt.....Durwood Griffen	Mason City Monroe Junior High
Buffalo Center.....Wilbert Graber	J. J. Fitzgerald
Clarion.....C. A. Burmeister	Meservey.....Margaret Huntsberg
Clarksville.....G. D. Boshart	Nora Springs.....E. L. Snyder
Clear Lake.....John Kopecky	Northwood.....L. T. Dillon
Clear Lake Junior Drum Corps	Osage.....Frank Piersol
John Kopecky	Riceville.....Lester R. Yager
Dumont.....M. W. Seipp	Rockford.....Leigh Humstad
Eagle Grove.....Marcus G. Boe	Rockwell.....Charles F. Muelder
Eldora Training School.....I. A. Lowell	Rudd.....Leon W. Krafft
Elmore, Minnesota.....A. W. Hull	St. Ansgar.....Donald I. Barrows
Fertile.....A. T. Grundahl	Sheffield.....Meredith Griffing
Floyd.....E. A. Sheldon	Swaledale.....Clyde Freeman
Forest City.....Hugh J. Croft	Thompson.....J. F. Tesar
Garner.....Harry K. Smith	Thornton.....Byron E. Dillon
Greene.....R. O. Morris	Ventura.....John Kopecky
Hampton.....F. O. Griffen	Ventura Drum and Bugle Corps
Hanlontown.....Lowell Lyford	John Kopecky
Hayfield.....Marion G. Arends	Waukon.....Darwin T. Maurer
Humboldt.....O. Clifford Anderson	Waverly.....Robert Bagley
Joice.....J. W. Schar	Wellsburg.....R. C. Baskins
Kensett.....Ralph Geer	

(Over for Day Program)

Iowa Band Festival (for so it was known by name and by number) which was held in conjunction with the Centennial of the Territory of Iowa in 1938. The *Des Moines Register* of June 19, 1938, records as follows:

Band Festival Begins Today. — Thousands of visitors are expected here today, Monday and Tuesday for the city's observance of the Iowa centennial, Mason City's eighty-fifth anniversary, and the third annual North Iowa band festival.

The celebration will get under way this afternoon with an interfaith service in East park. In the evening a centennial concert will be presented by the municipal band, under the direction of Carleton L. Stewart.

Monday has been designated as reunion day and a reunion program will be held in Mozart Music hall. A concert will be given in Central park during the evening, followed at 9:30 p.m. by a pavement dance.

The climax of the celebration will come on Tuesday when bands and drum corps (47) will give concerts in Central park throughout the day.

The centennial parade of bands and floats through the business section is scheduled for 11 a.m. Tuesday. The 47 bands and drum corps compose more than 2000 musicians.

Thirty-three of the towns whose bands will participate in the festival have entered candidates for Miss North Iowa. The queen will be crowned at the closing event at Roosevelt stadium Tuesday evening.

During the years 1939-1942 inclusive, the North Iowa Band Festival was held with steadily mounting enthusiasm. World War II then intervened and no Band Festivals were held for the

duration. When peace was restored in 1945, preparations were made to resume the North Iowa Band Festival. The first Band Festival after World War II was included with the 5-day celebration of the Centennial of Iowa Statehood in 1946. This happy coincidence was doubtless brought about by the fact that Lester Milligan was not only a founding father of the North Iowa Band Festival but he was also the chairman of the State Centennial Committee on which the present writer also served.

The 1946 Centennial celebration featured the first showing of the United States Army's jet propelled "Shooting Star" as well as a Superfort and at least 16 other planes. The United States Army Band began a 10-day Iowa tour by being featured at the North Iowa Band Festival. It joined forty other Iowa bands in the colorful morning parade. The climax of the 1946 program was the crowning of Marilyn Fowler of Greene as queen of the North Iowa Band Festival.

By 1946, the North Iowa Band Festival was so much a part of Mason City life that it had become customary to link other important events with it. Thus, both the Territorial and State Centennials had been celebrated with it. Now, in 1953, Mason City was approaching the 100th anniversary of its founding and the 15th North Iowa Band Festival. Plans were laid to make this the biggest Band Festival yet. Fully 86 bands and queen

candidates had come to the 1952 Festival, a far cry from the 17 bands that had participated in the massed band concert in 1936. In 1948 and 1950, Meredith Willson, Mason City's beloved native son and one-man Chamber of Commerce, had returned to his home town. In 1953, he was returning again to participate in the musical extravaganza. The 100 bands and 100 queens, with the more than 5,000 band members, added color and verve to what had long been known for its brilliant pageantry. The Manchester High School Band was chosen to give a special marching demonstration under the direction of Erling B. Hanson. Bruce Stengel, the amazing baton twirler from Wisconsin, put on two performances.

The 100 bands and 100 queens proved a fitting climax to the 100th anniversary of the founding of Mason City. Meredith Willson and Carleton L. Stewart directed the massed bands and Jacqueline Maulson of Manchester was crowned queen of the Centennial Festival.

A distinguishing feature of the North Iowa Band Festival is the unflagging enthusiasm that permeates each session. The reproduction of the programs contained herein reveals that the format has not varied since its inception, except for the addition of the nomination of a queen to represent each band from which the North Iowa Band Festival queen is chosen. The reason for the unqualified success of the Festival must be attributed

to the whole-hearted cooperation of different segments of the Mason City community. To this must be added the enthusiastic support of surrounding communities in the preparation of their beautiful floats and the annual return of their bands. As a result, the Band Festival has made a tremendous impact on the social, cultural, and musical development of Mason City, and the other Iowa communities that have returned almost yearly to participate in the colorful event.

The *Mason City Globe-Gazette* of June 6, 1958, aptly summarized these contributions:

Hundreds of women work in the churches which feed the visiting bands so that the restaurants may be free to serve the thousands of people who follow the event. Many others serve on committees which handle the multitude of details necessary for such an affair.

CO-OPERATION of the public bodies of city and county is generous. The Iowa Safety Patrol moves in every available man to help handle the crowds.

The county lends material for platforms, the city mobilizes street, fire, police and park departments to help with the big day.

The contribution of the Mason City Public Schools is especially notable and definitely necessary in holding the festival. They turn over without charge the entire facilities of the high school building and several down-town grade buildings for band headquarters during the day.

They also contribute the equally important facilities at Roosevelt football and baseball fields for the night show. The entire custodial force is placed at the disposal of the festival for erection of platforms and bleachers.

A committee of hostesses from the Mason City Wom-

an's Club is in charge at each school building during the day. The behavior of the large crowd of youngsters has always been extraordinarily good.

The Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. open their buildings during the day for free swims in the afternoon. The festival committee provides theater tickets, to which the youngsters add a nominal sum good for any show during the afternoon.

A notable contribution has been that of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, which for years has handled the morning parade. They have learned to move this two hour event with admirable on-time precision.

The parade crowd is estimated at from 35,000 to 40,000 persons. The night show will exceed 15,000. A series of concerts by visiting bands is held during the day in Central Park. The queen candidates also make a special appearance there at 2:30 p.m. on their way to the theater.

The North Iowa Band Festival is a big event. It involves a lot of planning, a lot of co-operation, and a lot of work. Its sponsors are well repaid, not only in good will for the host city, but also in the satisfaction of providing a day of enjoyment and fellowship for some of the finest young people in the world.

It was out of such splendid teamwork that Mason City entered upon a decade of North Iowa Band Festivals during which time three were destined to be especially outstanding. The first was held in 1958 following the smashing success of Meredith Willson's *The Music Man* on Broadway. The second was held in 1962 following the appearance of Warner Brothers glamorous hit production of *The Music Man*. The third was held in 1968 on the occasion of the 30th North

Iowa Band Festival, which also marked the reunion of the graduates of Mason City High School in 1918-1919. The presence of Meredith Willson at each of these Band Festivals was in itself a guarantee of success.

It was the universal applause accorded Meredith Willson's *The Music Man* that added a new note and a new dimension to the North Iowa Band Festival. From 1957 on, Mason City would have the sobriquet—River City—a name that was destined to be better known to most Americans than Mason City itself.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

BROADWAY'S LONG RUNNING PLAYS

(As of November 1, 1967)

Life with Father	3,213
Tobacco Road	3,182
My Fair Lady	2,717
Abie's Irish Rose	2,327
Oklahoma!	2,246
South Pacific	1,925
Harvey	1,775
Born Yesterday	1,643
*Hello Dolly	1,574
Mary, Mary	1,572
Voice of the Turtle	1,558
Barefoot in the Park	1,532
Arsenic and Old Lace	1,444
The Sound of Music	1,442
How to Succeed in Business	1,416
Hellzapoppin	1,404
The Music Man	1,376
Funny Girl	1,348
Angel Street	1,295
Lightnin'	1,291

(*) Still running

World Almanac 1968